



## Public Service Commission

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Rory M. Christian, Chair

**Contact:**

James Denn | [James.Denn@dps.ny.gov](mailto:James.Denn@dps.ny.gov) | (518) 474-7080

<http://www.dps.ny.gov>

<http://twitter.com/NYSDPS>

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## **PSC Launches Utility Employee Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative**

### **Commission Encourages Utilities to Hire People with Diverse Backgrounds**

**ALBANY** — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today initiated a proceeding to examine the diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts of the major New York State electric, gas, and water utilities. With its decision, the Commission directed utilities with 100 or more employees in their New York operations to develop diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plans.

“The Commission recognizes the many benefits of a diverse workforce on a utility's operations,” **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** “Intuitively, a workforce that – like the utility's service territory – includes, but is not limited to, individuals with differing races, ethnicities, national origins, physical abilities, sexual orientations, and genders will help to ensure that the utility can draw upon a large pool of ideas and experiences to address operational and customer needs.”

In making its decision, the Commission said a diverse workforce helps businesses become more agile and resilient, and an inclusive workplace improves employee morale, engagement, and retention. Diversity can also enhance recruiting and advancement activities. Companies that utilize diverse interview panels combined with diversity and inclusion-training for interviewers can reduce implicit biases and ensure the company hires and promotes the most qualified candidates.

Absent consideration of diversity and inclusion, hiring and recruitment would be stunted by shallower candidate pools, resulting in missed opportunities to improve utility management. Further, a diverse workforce that reflects the utility's service territory helps ensure customer outreach and messaging efforts will reach those who need the information most. Utility messaging is critical to the success of programs directed toward low- to moderate-income customers.

In recognition of these benefits, companies often take specific actions to ensure that they recruit and retain a diverse workforce. These actions can include corporate policies, designated diversity officers, training programs, recruitment efforts, community outreach, or similar steps that actively promote diversity and inclusion in hiring, promotion, and contracting efforts. To promote inclusiveness for employees, many companies further establish non-discrimination policies, offer support services, or take similar actions.

In recent years, New York's utilities have been developing DEI strategies. The Commission initiated this proceeding to enhance utilities' existing efforts and ensure that the utilities have the opportunity to learn from their counterparts and receive stakeholder input.

Going forward, the Commission said utility DEI plans should identify corporate strategies and communication training, including but not limited to consultant-led efforts to inform DEI strategies, specific DEI roles added to the organization, as well as employee outreach efforts. Utility DEI plans should identify training efforts to educate employees throughout the organization, including but not limited to offering formal training programs, periodic employee training sessions, and available employee resources (e.g., online databases and learning portals).

To aid in the development of the DEI plans, the Department will organize a working group for all subject utilities, commencing by the end of 2022. The Department will facilitate working group discussions, which will allow each utility to share its draft DEI plan, and for the group to identify best practices. The utilities are also encouraged to engage in one-on-one discussions to learn more about their peers' strategies. Smaller utilities are encouraged to participate in the working group, as well as the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA), New York Power Authority (NYPA), and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). While the requirement to file DEI plans does not apply to LIPA, NYPA, or NYSERDA, the Commission anticipates these organizations will continue to progress in these areas and welcomes their participation in the working group.

Today's decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.ny.gov](http://www.dps.ny.gov) and entering Case Number 22-M-0314 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.